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The 'Stop Doing' List: A New Way to Look at Resolutions

I had it all planned out.

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4 amazing part-time internships and 18 credit hours, all in one semester. These jobs would give me the opportunity to rub shoulders with the best and brightest and gain the kind of experience that most students could only dream of. I could do it - just 14 hours a day and 6 days a week of tightly

scheduled classes, meetings, and study time. I would make it work - just barely.

Well, a good friend invited me to read an article by author Jim Collins entitled *Best New Year's Resolution? A 'Stop Doing' List*, in which he discusses the importance of worthy, sustainable priorities. He suggests the following guideline in planning:

Suppose you woke up tomorrow and received two phone calls. The first phone call tells you that you have inherited \$20 million, no strings attached. The second tells you that you have an incurable and terminal disease, and you have no more than 10 years to live. What would you do differently, and, in particular, what would you stop doing?

And so now here I am, having to make some bold decisions about where my priorities lie. This has forced me to make some uncomfortable choices and turn

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down a few opportunities. But at the same time, I believe this will allow me to really focus on the remaining priorities and make an even greater difference than I could have being spread so thin.

So for the new year, if you find your plate a little full, rather than piling more on, consider where your priorities lie. Drop the extraneous and give what's remaining your full, undivided attention.

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Get Out, Get Involved, Leave Your Comfort Zone

For the past few months I have been involved in the Students for Social Entrepreneurship club creating their website. After many hours of work, it is finally finished, aside from fleshing out some content. What's the moral of this story? Get out there, get involved, and leave your comfort zone. I had never made a site before, but I was extremely interested in social entrepreneurship, and I wanted some web design experience. This has turned out to be such an enriching experience for me. Is there something you've wanted to do? Go ahead, give it a try.

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You can check the website out at <http://studentsforsocent.org/>.



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Staying Organized and Motivated: Planners and To-do Lists

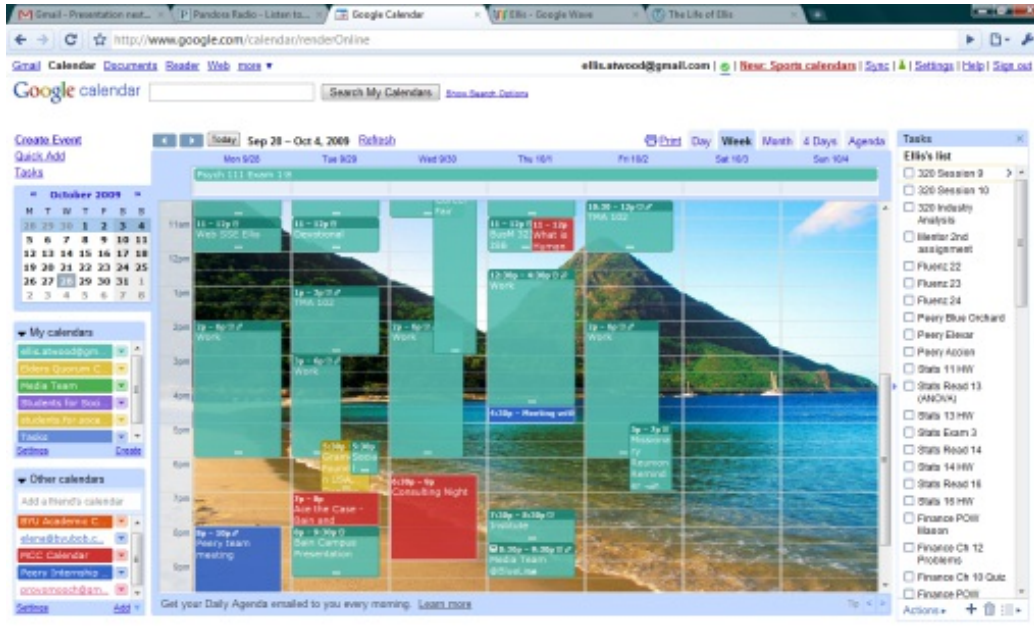
For the past couple of years I have been struggling to find a planning device that met my needs as a student. I tried Franklin Covey - too bulky. I tried a small Day Runner - not enough space. I tried a PDA - too clunky. I tried no planner - too many missed deadlines. I even resorted to using my phone's calendar, but texting every appointment gets old really fast. After all this searching, I have finally found the ultimate planning device - I found Google Calendar. Here's why it's great:

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1. *Versatility* - Create appointments, move them with the drag of a mouse, create repeating appointments, set up SMS reminders, and the list goes on.

2. *Integrability* – Seamless integration with other google services. Gmail recognizes event information in emails and can send it to Google Calendar in just one click. One click will also bring up a google map of the event location.

3. *Ubiquity* – On campus, most organizations now have google calendars. Many students (especially in the business school) are also adapting. The power of this comes in the ability to mash multiple calendars together. Consider the situation in the screenshot below. Not only do I see my personal events, but I can see the BYU Academic calendar, events from Students for Social Entrepreneurship, my internship group's calendar, and Management Consulting Club events. All of these events are updated and maintained by someone else so I can focus my attention elsewhere.



On top of the calendar, a surprisingly effective tool for staying organized and motivated is the to-do list. The beauty of a to-do list is in it's simplicity – all you really need is a piece of paper (although Google Calendar does have a nice to-do list feature). A couple of semesters ago I stumbled upon an end of semester ritual that has helped me immensely to stay motivated. About a month or two before the semester is over, I gather all my syllabi, take inventory of my remaining assignments, and make a giant to-do list of everything. Then I count how many items are on the list and calculate how many items I need to cross off each day. There is a certain satisfaction in having a large list to plow through – it almost becomes a game of 'let's see how far ahead I can get'.

So there you have it. Two great productivity tools. Both free and easy. If you don't already have a good organization system, get your calendar and to-do list off of your mind and onto paper (or computer screen). You've got more important things to focus on.

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7 Tools for Learning a Language

One of the best ways to connect with the world and expand your horizons is to learn a new language. Of course, this task sounds daunting, but it really doesn't have to be – just take it one step at a time. I have been working on Spanish since the beginning of the summer, and have loved every moment of it. In the process, I have come up with a list of 7 tools that will guarantee language learning success.

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1. **Motivation** – There's no way around it – learning a language is work. The only way to succeed is to be motivated. Choose a language that has special meaning to you. Come up with milestones and rewards along the way (see tool

7) to help you stay excited.

2. Quality Method - Some methods of learning a language are just better than others. I prefer self-directed methods because you know your learning style better than anyone else. Still though, there are many options. For my language learning, I have been relying heavily on *Fluenz* program. This program focuses on teaching usable structures from the beginning rather than teaching simple words and phrases that you don't see in real life. For instance, while a program like *Rosetta Stone* might teach you "The apple is red", *Fluenz* teaches "How much does that cost?". For me, this method is very encouraging, as you will be communicating from day one.

3. Steno Pad - If you aren't familiar with this, a steno pad is a small notebook with the spiral on top and a line down the middle of each page. It was originally developed for dictation in shorthand so that two pages of information could fit on one page. However, it is perfect for language learning. Simply put any new words you learn in English in the left column, and in the foreign language on the right. Then, review them frequently. These notebooks typically have about 80 sheets with 22 lines each. This translates to 1,760 words, or 3,520 words if you write on both sides - this equates to 1 notebook to reach fluency! For me that is encouraging.

4. Verb Book - Conjugation, conjugation, conjugation. Any way you look at it, you can't master a language without knowledge of its verbs and their conjugation. A verb book is a must.

5. Immersion Content - To really grasp a language, you need to become comfortable leaving the textbook behind and seeing it used in the real world. Immersion content helps to bridge this gap. This can include anything in that language outside of your regular learning program, including TV shows, magazines, books, etc. Learn to love the arts and media surrounding your language.

6. Language Partner - Having someone to talk to in your new language is essential for fluency. Take time regularly to have conversations in the new language and to receive feedback from a fluent speaker. Luckily, the internet makes this process much easier. Sites like *Livemocha.com* specialize in bringing language learners from all over the world together so that you can get experience no matter how obscure your new language is.

7. Reward - This goes back to motivation. Reward yourself as you reach milestones in your language learning. Naturally this reward would come as a trip to a foreign land where your new language is spoken. Rewards don't have to be that expensive though. My rewards in Spanish include trips to local Mexican restaurants where I can practice speaking.

With these tools, you should be ready to expand your horizons and tackle any language. If you're working on a language, drop me a line and let me know how it's going!

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My Grand Project - Starting a Business

This summer has been extremely busy for me - honestly I think I always bite off more than I can chew. I get off of work at 6 every evening and then the rest of the time is torn between learning Spanish (my summer goal), cooking (my stress relieving hobby), studying sales (I can be a pushover and I'm trying to change that), writing this blog (quite time intensive), and also church activities. So what do I do? Take on another task - starting a business.

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Last year I was reading a book by Cal Newport titled *How to Win at College*. For this book, he interviewed some of the nation's most successful students to find out what made them tick. He then outlined their advice in his book. The concept that was most influential to me was the idea of always having a grand project - a goal you work towards outside of the regular curriculum to cultivate your confidence and a can-do attitude. He explained the concept of a grand project as follows:

"Your Grand Project should consist of a group of achievable, nonacademic



accomplishments that, when combined, move you closer to an exciting aspiration. Think big. Be ambitious. When you explain a Grand Project to someone it should elicit a response of "Wow!" Working on such a project will keep you constantly excited and energetic. It will keep the pressures of course work in perspective, and make it easy to brush aside the little bad occurrences that pop up now and then. When you work on a highly ambitious project, you feel invincible, like you are a step ahead of the rest of the world, forging unique paths to great success. It doesn't matter if you don't always succeed. The novelty and thrill of taking chances is a powerful force."

Ever since reading that, I've been in search of my own Grand Project. I've had some crazy business ideas along the way (juice boxes marketed towards adults, an 'organic' lawn mowing business consisting of a flock of goats) and also some good ones too (what, you think I'd share those?). Finally, I settled on something that met my criteria - it helps people, it is manageable (along with school and another job), it has virtually no startup cost, and it has high earning potential. What is it? A cleaning business for students.

Now before you tell me this is the worst target audience ever for such a luxury service, hear me out. Here in Provo, all the student apartment complexes have mandatory cleaning checks and they always seem to be at the worst time, like right before midterms or during finals. If your apartment isn't clean, you get slapped with a large fine.

And that's where I come in - to save the day - to clean for you when you don't have time. Because, *You've Got Better Things to Do™*.

I'll keep you up to date on how everything goes. In the mean time, what is your grand project? Is it a business? Is it research? Is it something artistic? Really anything out of the box will do. Try it out - start a project. You'll feel invincible as it begins to unfold.

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Remembering Names, Part 2

In an earlier post, I mentioned a unique method for learning names. However, no matter how good we are, *we are all human - sometimes we will forget*. In fact, although with our self-deprecating attitudes we tend to think otherwise, the truth is that *95% of the population is bad with names* (and 85% of statistics are made up on the spot - but that's besides the point). So the question isn't so much whether we forget, but how we handle forgetting. Imagine two scenarios:

Scenario 1. You forget someone's name. You are too embarrassed to ask them. You continue to be awkward around them for weeks thinking that someone will drop their name eventually and you won't have to ask. You can't establish an

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open relationship. Eventually, someone does drop their name. But by now it is too late – their opinion of you is already formed – you are the shy awkward person who seems to always hold back.

Scenario 2: You forget someone's name. You are embarrassed, but you ask them to remind you anyways (this may even happen more than once). They tell you, and you laugh and joke about the whole situation. You establish a normal relationship. They forget that you forgot their name because of other good experiences that come along. Their opinion of you is formed – you are an awesome person who is fun to be around and knows when to not take life too seriously.

Same situation, two different approaches, two different outcomes. Which do you prefer? Don't be afraid to ask.

-Ellis

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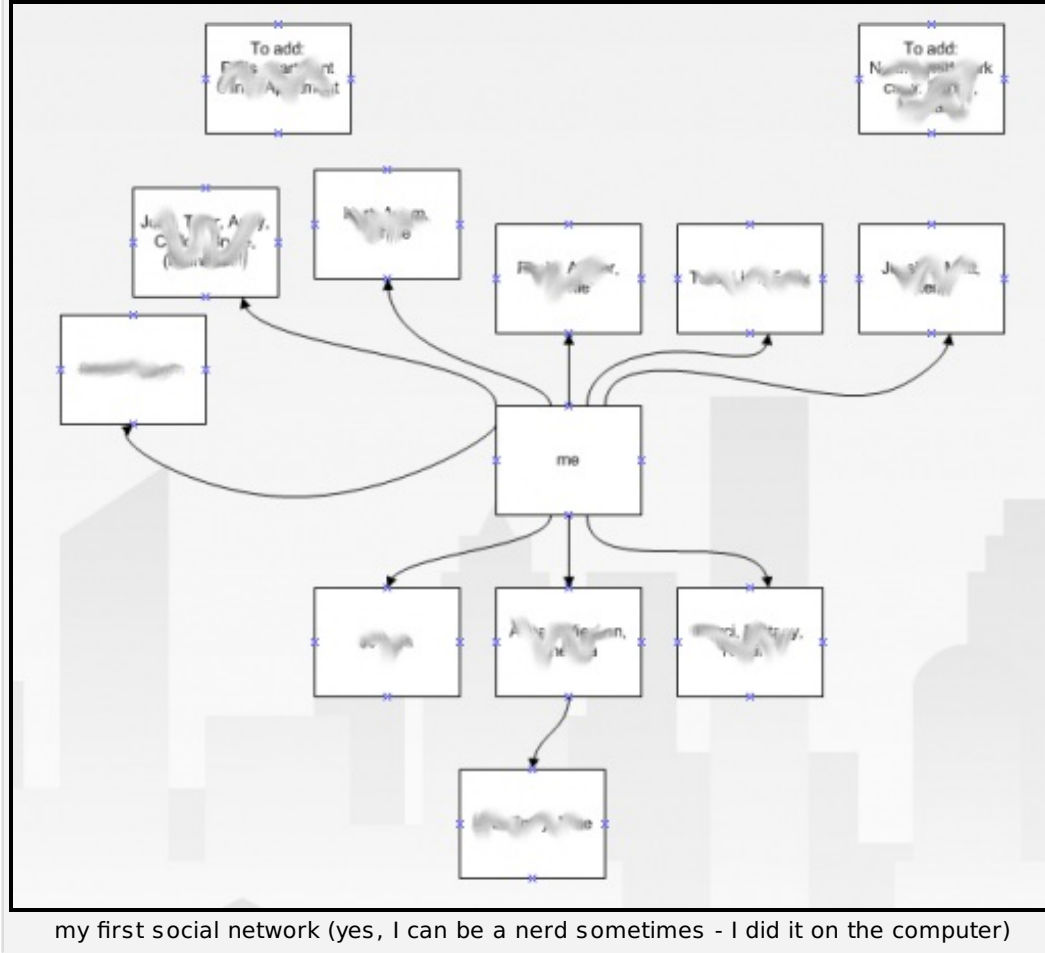
Paper Social Network

Summer's here. Well okay, it's been here for a while. But if you live in a college town like me, you know what this means – social life can fall flat, especially if everyone else goes home. All of the sudden you find yourself back at square one in the *meeting new people* stage. Unfortunately, meeting new people is easier said than done. Sometimes we can get in such a social rut and become so comfortable with a few close friends that when they aren't around, we don't know what to do. When this happened to me this summer, I got kind of desperate. After doing some brainstorming, I got this crazy idea – physically map out my social network. I thought this would just be a fun experiment, but to my surprise it actually helped me socially. With this map, I knew exactly who to talk to and where to go to expand my circle of friends.

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Here's how to do it:

1. Take a piece of paper and draw a circle in the middle. In that circle, write "Me".
2. Create more circles with your closest friends (or groups of friends) directly above and below your circle. Connect with lines.
3. Create circles farther out for friends you don't talk to as much, then connect them to your circle.
4. For friends of friends, draw circles on the outside connected to the person that you know them through.
5. Review your map and ask yourself some questions:
 1. Who have I not spent time with lately?
 2. Who might have some great friends I could meet?
 3. Who should I develop stronger relationships with?
6. Finally, make concrete plans to expand your network.



It doesn't matter how large or small your network currently is - this visual approach will help you to see where relationships can be strengthened and where your best sources for new friends are. Give it a try - let me know how it works for you.

Cheers,

-Ellis

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Remembering Names

Last summer I was placed in an interesting situation. I had just left Texas and was starting a new year of college at Brigham Young University in Utah. It so happened that I didn't know a single person in the apartment complex I was moving to, and I was also slightly introverted and extremely self-conscious (more posts on how I got over that another time). Being the type of person who always feels the need to work on something, I set a unique summer goal - to shed the "sorry, I'm really bad with names" excuse. The fact is, I was horrible with names. Someone would introduce themselves, and the name wouldn't even stick around for two seconds.

I figured a new life in a new state would be perfect practicing ground for developing this trait. I had heard various pieces of advice on the subject, but I wasn't really sure which method would work for me. So, I made my own. It consisted of a few simple principles:

1. Always carry a notecard and a pen in your pocket
2. When someone shares their name, make a pointed effort to take mental note of it. Repeat it in your mind as they talk. Repeat it back to them in your conversation.

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3. Look for something unique and unchanging about that person that you can associate with their name. It helps if it rhymes with their name, but this is not at all necessary. (ei “Jenny – overly jubilant’ or ‘Mark – sounds like the movie trailer voice’).

4. As soon as they turn their back, take out your notecard, and write down their name and their unique characteristic. Just a note – if ever there was a place to be euphemistic, this is it! The last thing you want is for someone to stumble on their notecard and see something like ‘Kyle – guy version of Susan Boyle.’

5. Review your notecard that night and also before any situation in which you might potentially see that person again.

I learned a lot about how my memory works from this experience. Before, when someone would say their name, it would go in one ear and out the other. *This is how we are conditioned to accept information.* We let the specifics pass through, and only hold on to the big picture. What we hear is “Hey my name’s Tanya. I’m from California.” What we remember is “she’s a girl and she’s not from here.” This is how normal interactions should be – if we get bogged down in every detail, it would be too hard to have a normal conversation. Most people claim to be bad with names because they haven’t trained themselves to take special note of that one crucial piece of information.

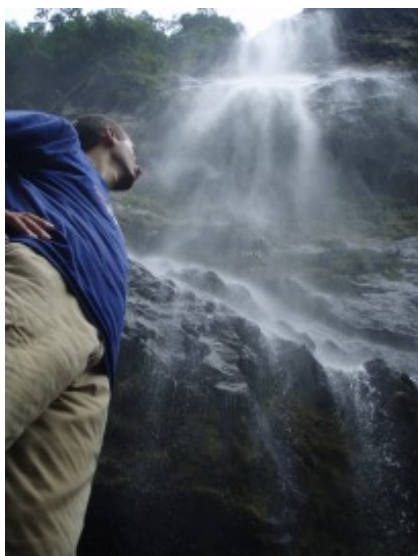
The notecard method forces your mind to focus on names as they come up. The notecard is a physical reminder that you are responsible to remember the name *and* the person associated with it. The beauty of this system is that a focus on names eventually becomes natural and you can shed the notecard. Go ahead – give it a try. Meet some new people and show you genuinely care by remembering their names.

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Quest for Potential



We live far beneath our capacities – that is my conviction. Think about it. What goals could you reach, what relationships could you build, what lives could you touch, if you gave yourself the time?

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This blog is a chronicle of my quest for potential. In it I will share my goals, my struggles, my breakthroughs, and the lessons I learn along the way on how to reach potential and make a difference in the world.

See what a difference you can make in your life and in the life of others when you set specific goals and learn to live to reach them.

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